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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KAWC](#) [BK](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA OPPOSES USE OF BONN POWERS FOR SREBRENICA
ELECTIONS

REF: A. SARAJEVO 757

[1](#)B. SARAJEVO 735

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Russia strongly opposes use of the Bonn Powers by the High Representative to redress potential Serbian control of the Srebrenica municipal administration following elections in October. While recognizing the sensitivity of the issue, the MFA believes use of the Bonn Powers would undermine the rule of law and democratic principles in Bosnia, and stresses the issue can only be resolved by the Bosnia-Herzegovina Parliament. When asked what Russia would do if the High Rep invoked the Bonn Powers, the MFA only responded that Russia would "support the rule of law in Bosnia." End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) We met with MFA Head of the Bosnia desk Ivan Gorbunov on April 30 to raise concerns regarding the possibility that Serbs could win the October 2008 municipal elections in Srebrenica, which could provoke another political crisis in Bosnia (reftels). Gorbunov said that Russia understood the concerns but noted that they had been known for over three years, as well as at the time the BiH election law had been passed. The BiH Parliament had had years to address the issue and could have made a stronger effort to amend the legislation or reach a mutually-agreed solution. (We pointed out that efforts had been made to amend the law but the parties had been unable to agree.) Gorbunov argued that the current law allows those who lived in Srebrenica in 1991 to vote there, provided they re-registered, and noted that it was possible that some living elsewhere would prefer to vote in their current locality.

[1](#)3. (C) Gorbunov said it was impossible to predict now how many Bosniaks would re-register in Srebrenica in the next five months. The Bosniak leadership could make more efforts to mobilize voters and encourage them to re-register in Srebrenica. He said he doubted the Serbs would be able to agree on a single candidate for Mayor, and if the Bosniaks could, there was a good possibility they would win the election.

[1](#)4. (C) He stressed that Russia would strongly oppose the use of the Bonn Powers by the High Rep, but declined to specify any further steps Russia would take. Invoking the Bonn Powers, he said, would undermine the rule of law and the principle of democracy in Bosnia. It would send the wrong message and would be used to exploit religious and ethnic divisions, rather than re-engage citizens in the democratic

process. If the BiH leaders were unable to amend the legislation, he argued, they could try to agree on an interpretation of the law that would resolve the issue. He added that Russia also opposed efforts to make Srebrenica "a special case, like Brcko" or to take it out of the legal framework within the Republika Srpska.

15. (C) When asked what he expected would happen if the Serbs did win in Srebrenica, Gorbunov said he anticipated there would be "a lot of emotional statements" by the Bosniaks, but after a few weeks, the situation would calm down. Since Srebrenica was "under strict control of the OHR," and the goal of EU membership was the one issue that united the entire country, Gorbunov downplayed the prospect of serious or violent repercussions.

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